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**USTR Charlene Barshefsky and Secretary of Commerce William M. Daley
To Establish New Procedures for Advice from Non-Governmental Organizations**

United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky and Secretary of Commerce William M. Daley jointly announced today an initiative to enhance opportunities for interested environmental, consumer, and other non-governmental organizations to provide their views to the Administration on key trade issues. The two agencies will promptly initiate a consultation procedure for soliciting views from interested parties on procedures for strengthening channels of communication with these groups in the development of U.S. trade policy.

“The initiative announced today reflects the Administration’s continuing commitment to ensuring that the concerns and priorities of non-governmental groups are fully represented in the trade policy advisory process,” Ambassador Barshefsky stated. “We welcome ideas from interested parties, including our existing advisory committees, on how we might improve our procedures for securing advice from across the broad spectrum of civil society,” said Secretary Daley.

The joint initiative responds to requests by environmental and other non-governmental groups for greater participation in the development of U.S. trade policy. A suit filed in federal district court in Seattle has sought the inclusion of environmental representatives on certain existing trade advisory committees. In November, the district court directed USTR and Commerce to include qualified environmental representatives on two Industry Sector Advisory Committees established under federal law. The two agencies are carrying out the court’s order and at the same time the Justice Department has filed an appeal on the basis for the decision. The appeal was filed on Friday, January 7, 2000.

“Congress has carefully designed a structure for channeling important negotiating advice to the Administration from the manufacturing and services sectors of our economy,” said Secretary Daley. “The court’s ruling, if permitted to stand, could undermine the framework that Congress established. At the same time, we need to take additional steps to ensure that we receive timely and comprehensive advice from other non-governmental groups as well.”

Congress and the Administration have previously established a variety of official advisory committees from which the Executive Branch solicits and obtains advice from environmental, labor, and other non-governmental organizations. For example, Congress has provided for the CEO-level Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations to include environmental representatives. The President has established the CEO-level Trade and Environmental Advisory Committee (TEPAC) to provide a forum in which advice on both trade and trade-related environmental policy issues can be provided to the Administration. Members of both Committees, including representatives of five different environmental organizations, were included on the official U.S. delegation to the recent World Trade Organization ministerial conference held in Seattle. Similarly, a Labor Advisory Committee provides advice to the Administration on labor-related issues.

The advisory committee system is but one of a variety of mechanisms through which the Administration seeks advice from interested groups and organizations on the development of U.S. trade policy. For example, in formulating specific U.S. objectives in major trade negotiations, USTR routinely solicits written comments from the public, consults with and briefs interested constituencies, holds public hearings, and meets with a broad spectrum of groups at their request. In addition, the President’s recent Executive Order on environmental reviews of trade agreements and its implementing guidelines will establish an inclusive process for bringing environmental perspectives into the development of U.S. trade negotiating objectives.

Daley and Barshefsky committed to working closely with a broad range of civil society interests on trade-related matters. “We encourage and support strengthening relationships between non-governmental organizations and government agencies, which will help ensure that the perspectives of these organizations are fully considered in the trade policy and negotiating process,” they said.